

## **Wisconsin Wildlife Federation**

Chairman Mursau, members of the Assembly Natural Resources Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify here today on behalf of the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation and the 170 hunting, fishing, trapping and forestry related organizations that make up the Federation. The Federation strongly supports Assembly Bill 104 and would like to thank Representatives LeMahieu for his long-time leadership on this issue.

This bill is critically important in the long term to assure that the seven men and women who are appointed as members of the Natural Resources Board have a sound grounding in the pursuits of hunting, fishing and trapping as recreational activities and that the voice of agriculture has a direct voice on the establishment of natural resources policies in the state.

AB 104 requires that three of the seven Board members have held hunting, fishing or trapping licenses, seven out of the ten years previous to their appointment. Our review of the history of the Natural Resources Board and its major predecessor the Wisconsin Conservation Commission indicates that this standard has been met from 1928 through today. Currently, at least five of the NRB members meet this standard.

If this is the case, why is this bill necessary? During my personal experience as a member of the leadership staff of the DNR, I worked closely with the agencies in other states that had natural resource management experience. In several of those states, as the populations became more urbanized and vast numbers of their populations lost the traditions of hunting, fishing and trapping, the boards or commissions that oversaw the natural resource policies of their states at times had memberships without people that had day-to-day knowledge of the importance of hunting, fishing and trapping as critically important components of natural resource management. And in one state that I observed the state's Wildlife Commission actually had a decidedly anti-hunting philosophy. The professional natural resource managers in that state had their hands tied in implementing sound natural resource management policies. These bills are an insurance policy to prevent that future in Wisconsin, similar to the importance of the Constitutional Amendment to Hunt, Fish and Trap.

The Wildlife Federation strongly recommends that this license requirement be added for several of the top administrative positions in the Department of Natural Resources itself. The same policy reasons that make this a good bill also apply to senior leadership positions at the DNR.

Why is it important to have someone with an agricultural background on the Board?

First, it has been the actual practice of Governors of both parties to appoint a NRB member with agricultural experience since the early 1970s. My personal observations in various roles in the agency and since are that this presence is critically important in

setting natural resource policies in Wisconsin. Whether it be deer management, water pollution, forestry or land acquisition, agriculture is heavily entwined and plays a more critical role in more natural resource policies than any other economic sector. My personal experience as DNR Secretary was that it was vital to have an experienced voice of agriculture at the table when key natural resource management policies were being established. I believe that other former secretaries and board members would concur with this observation.

In conclusion, the Wildlife Federation strongly encourages you to advance this bill in the very near future.

Submitted by:  
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